



WASHINGTON WATCH

THE NEWS FROM REP. KEN CALVERT, 43RD DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

Dear Students:

I am concerned about the state of education in America today. I believe that the static level in test scores of U.S. students do not reflect the billions of dollars in government spending. As the most prosperous nation on earth, our children should have the best education possible.

I believe that the answers lie right at home with the students, teachers and parents. Congress is working to give state and local officials greater flexibility to spend education dollars where they see the most need. Our communities know what students need to succeed rather than having bureaucrats in Washington making the decisions from 3,000 miles away.

This is a top issue I am working on in Congress this year. Your input is vital to reach the best solution so that students are equipped to be tomorrow's leaders. I hope you will take the time to read this brief newsletter and let me know what you think.

Sincerely

Ken Calvert

The Military Academy Nomination Process

The Military Academy Nomination Process can be confusing, but it is really no more complicated than applying to any school of higher education. The major difference is that your application must be nominated by either your local Member of Congress, one of your two Senators, or the Vice President. The President also has an unlimited number of nominations that he may grant for the children of career officers and enlisted personnel of the armed forces.

As the Member of Congress representing western Riverside County, I have taken great pride in nominating, and ultimately seeing those I have nominated, accepted to our United States Military Academies. Especially, since the young women and men accepted over the years have served as such outstanding testaments of our community's character and nurturing. Below you will find a simple 10 point outline of the process, if you choose to apply for my nomination to any of the Military Academies:

- **Spring of Junior year to beginning of Senior Year (in high school)**— Request the "Application for Nomination" from the Riverside district office.
- **November 1st** — Deadline for applications to be submitted to my Riverside district office. Applications are then reviewed by an Academy Nominations Selection Committee that I have formed. The six member committee is comprised of graduates of West Point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy and a representative from the Riverside County Office of Education.
- **Mid-November** — All candidates meeting the minimum requirements established by the Military academies will be selected to continue the nomination process - the personal interview.
- **Early to Mid-December** — The Committee interviews the qualified candidates. In the week following the interviews, it is determined who will be nominated to which Academy. I then submit those nominations to each Academy and notify every candidate, in writing, of the nomination decisions, and if nominated, to which military academy or academies (you may be nominated to more than one Academy).
- **Spring** — Military Academies notify me of the majority of their "Offers of Appointment," usually between March and late April. As soon as I am notified, I personally call each candidate.
- **June** — The Military Academy Appointee Luncheon for all candidates who have received and accepted offers to a military academy, their parents and the Members of the Academy Nominations Selection Committee.

What Washington DC is Doing on the Education Front:

I am proud to say that Congress has made great strides toward improving our educational system. Everyone agrees that a well educated America is a strong America. And education will remain our top priority this year.

What is the plan to secure the future of our children and generations to come? To ensure that all children receive a world-class education in a safe environment (ensuring that every child can read by the 3rd grade), that the best and brightest go into teaching and that 95 percent of all American students graduate from high school and have access to a college education.

To do these things we must, first and foremost, get the dollars to the classroom. On October 12, 1999, Congress passed the Dollars to the Classroom Resolution (H.Res. 303). This resolution requires that the Department of Education, states and local education agencies work together to ensure that not less than 95 percent of all educational funds are spent to improve academic achievement in the classroom. Before this resolution it was estimated that more than 30 cents of every federal education dollar never reached the classroom, but was lost in federal, state and local bureaucracy.

Greater flexibility for states to design child-centered programs run by local communities, parents and teachers is also a fundamental ingredient to our plan. Why? Quite simply, all school needs are not alike. Some schools may find themselves in need of more computers while others find that they need more supplies or expansion of campus buildings. In April 1999 the Education Flexibility Partnership Act (Ed-Flex) was signed into law, by the President, to give schools the flexibility to address their needs. Ed-Flex, which originated in Congress, gives all 50 states the flexibility to design local education programs that meet the individual needs of communities. However, in exchange for this greater flexibility, schools must meet high academic standards.

Effective teaching and learning can only take place in an environment absent of fear, violence and drugs. We are approaching these issues through two primary bills before Congress this year. The Gun Free Schools Act requires

that schools have a one-year expulsion policy for students who bring firearms to school in order to receive federal funds. The Education OPTIONS Act allows schools to have more flexibility to hire school counselors, install metal detectors and implement character education programs in order to prevent drug use and violence on school campuses.

Lastly, we are proposing legislation this year, called Education Savings Accounts (HR 7), that will increase tax-free savings limits for education to \$2000. It also expands the program to grandparents, non-profit groups or even a civic-minded corporation to set up Educational Savings Accounts for education expenses at all levels of public and private education. It allows America to save money for educational opportunities for its future generations.

These pieces of legislation have a clear set of goals for education in America. I dream of an America where every student receives a world class education in a safe school, regardless of income, race, color, religion, state or neighborhood. I would like to see an America where the best and brightest teach our children. Just think of an America where ninety-five percent of students graduate from high school and have access to a college education. These are lofty goals, but not impossible.

Congress is taking progressive steps to make an educated America a reality. I know it sounds simple, and maybe even slow, but it is not an easy task to change the mentality in Washington, DC. However, we are doing it.

